

# Marriage in Japan



## Can I Get Married While Serving in Japan?

If you wish to marry in Japan, you will do so according to Japanese law. Marriage in Japan consists of a civil marriage registration by the couple at a Japanese municipal government office. Only this civil registration constitutes a legal marriage in Japan. Ceremonies performed by religious or fraternal bodies in Japan, while perhaps more meaningful for you, are not legal marriages.

Army personnel are no longer required to obtain command permission before getting married. However, you should consult AR 55-6 and AR 614-30 to ensure eligibility for command sponsorship.

## Who Can Get Married in Japan?

Under Japanese law, you must meet the following requirement to get married:

- The male partner must be 18 years of age or older and the female partner must be 16 years of age or older.
- In addition, for Americans, you must be able to legally marry in your home state; if the legal age of marriage at home is 18, you cannot marry earlier than that in Japan.
- A woman cannot get married within six months of the dissolution of her previous marriage.
- Most people related by blood, by adoption or through other marriages cannot get married in Japan.
- A person who is under 20 year of age cannot get married in Japan without parent's approval.

## For the American Partner...

Japanese law requires all foreigners who marry in Japan to first prepare a sworn **Affidavit of Competency to Marry** (Konin Yoken Gubi Shomeisho), affirming they are legally free to marry. This form is available in the Legal Assistance Office. The form must be notarized and translated into Japanese. You may translate the document yourself, or ask for a list of translators at Legal Assistance Office. If your partner is also an American, s/he must also complete a sworn Affidavit of Competency to Marry.

## For the Japanese Partner...

Your Japanese partner must also complete a Japanese municipal government form called the **Konin Todoke** needed to register a marriage. Two witnesses of any nationality over 20 years old must sign the Konin Todoke. Japanese citizens, and Korean and Chinese nationals, also need a certified copy of their family register (Koseki Tohon) or its extract (Koseki Shohon) issued within a month of the marriage.

If your partner is neither Japanese nor American, s/he should also contact her/his embassy for the marriage procedures needed in their own country. Some countries require back-home records checks and waiting periods; call in advance of your planned wedding day. Korean, Chinese or other nationals who are long-term permanent residents in Japan, or those who lack diplomatic or consular representation here, may be able to marry after obtaining a registration document (Gaijin Toroku Zumi Shomeisho) from a ward or city office.

## Getting Married...

Once all the paperwork is completed, proceed to the appropriate Japanese municipal government office. If either party is Japanese, use the city hall or ward office where the Japanese citizen is registered, or where the Japanese citizen's family register is maintained. If both are non-Japanese, both parties go the city hall nearest their residence with someone fluent in Japanese and English. For those residing on Camp Zama, the Zama City hall will assist you. (Suggested hours of operation at Zama city Hall are 0830-1100 and 1300-1630). Those residing on the Sagami-hara portion of Camp Zama, SHA, or Sagami Depot would go to Sagami-hara City Hall. Do not go to city hall without a translator if both parties are non-Japanese.

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### *Getting Married... (Continued from previous page...)*

Required documents must be presented with clear and complete translations into Japanese. Translations are the responsibility of the parties getting married. List of translators are available at the Legal Assistance Office, in case you cannot find anyone to get your documents translated. At the city hall, complete the Marriage certificate Application (Konin Todoke) if not completed earlier, and present it to the official with the other documents. The official will process the application (about 10 minutes).

Once the marriage procedures are completed, the municipal government office issues a Japanese language “Certificate of Acceptance of Notification of Marriage” (Kon-in Todoke Juri Shomeisho) for 350 Yen. This is a small form with a red han or seal —This is your legal marriage certificate. You are now legally married.

### **Documents Needed**

- **Proof of Nationality:** Passport is recommended. Birth Certificate (with translation), Certificate of Naturalization, Consular Report of Birth Abroad, or Certificate of Citizenship are also acceptable. Driver’s license is recommended for Japanese National. Citizens of third countries should have passport or certificate of Alien Registration issued by the Japanese government.
- **Affidavit of Competency to Marry ( for non-Japanese):** The form is available at the Legal Assistance Office and must be notarized. Japanese translation is necessary, however, need not notarized as long as the translator indicates name, address with Han (personal seal).
- **Marriage Certificate Application (Konin Todoke):** This can be picked up at the city hall or ward office where you submitting . 2 witnesses of any nationality over 20 years old must sign this document. Generally non-Japanese witnesses will sign, while Japanese, Korean, and Chinese national witnesses may be asked for their seal (Inkan / Han).
- **Letters of consent for minors:** A person who is under 20 years must have a parent’s approval. Japanese translation is needed.
- **Family register current within 6 months of the marriage:** If the city hall you’re submitting your documents is other than that of a family register of a Japanese spouse is maintained.

### **After You are Married...**

You should translate your Certificate of Acceptance of Notification of Marriage (the smaller form) into English. Once this is done, bring your translator and the translations to the Legal Assistance Office to obtain certified translations from Japanese to English -- you will need them later. You must also present your Certificate of Acceptance of Notification of Marriage to your command to initiate command sponsorship and logistical support.

### **Keep Records**

The Japanese language “Certificate of Acceptance of Notification Marriage” (Konin Todoke Juri Shomeisho) is your only proof of marriage. Write down the name and address of the municipal government office that registered your marriage, as you’ll need to contact them directly in the future to obtain proof of your marriage.

There are 2 versions of the “Certificate Acceptance of Notification of Marriage”, small or large version. The smaller version should cost about 350 Yen, the larger version should cost about 1500 Yen. You might want to get several copies of the small certificate to keep for your records.

**Marriage in Japan** is distributed by the Camp Zama Legal Assistance Office, located in Building 101, Room CE209. Our office hours are 08:30 to 12:00 and 13:00 to 16:30 Monday through Friday, except Thursday 13:00 to 15:00. You may call us for an appointment at DSN 263-4698 or commercial 046-407-4698.